



Hammer and Sickle = Worker-Peasant Alliance

## Report on the National and Colonial Question

V I Lenin wrote constantly. Writing and publishing his writing in newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and books was Lenin's main means of communication with the enormous movement that he led. Lenin was a very good and skilled writer, was the leading theoretician of his time, and was critically involved in world-shaping events. Marxists Internet Archive (MIA) contains 4170 "of a potential 4500" Lenin-authored documents, listed [by date](#), and alphabetically [by title](#). MIA also has the Progress Publishers, Moscow 1963-64 "[Lenin Selected Works](#)" selection. Which of Lenin's works should be included among our choice of classics? We have taken a view, and have included a number of them. Feedback is welcome, if you agree, or if you disagree.

Today we choose the crucial document that launched **National Democratic Revolution** (NDR) as the defining strategy and tactics of the struggle against Imperialism. Lenin gave the

report-back of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question to the Second Congress of the Communist International (often abbreviated as “2CCI”) on 26 July, 1920. This is the document that is attached, and downloadable via the first link below.

### **Origin of South Africa’s National Democratic Revolution**

The following year, at the third Comintern Congress (“3CCI”), the Communist Party of South Africa was admitted and thereby originally constituted, not on its own terms but on the Comintern’s terms, which since the previous year had included the NDR policy. This is the true origin of South Africa’s National Democratic Revolution of today.

Practical politics is always a matter of alliance, and in different circumstances, different alliances are called for. Communists commonly regard an alliance between workers and peasants as normal (hence the hammer-and-sickle logo, which was adopted as “official” by the communists in the same period). Proletarian parties have also, in the past, attempted class alliances with the bourgeoisie against feudalism, or against colonialism.

Tactical alliances - unity-in-action - are normal and necessary, in order to isolate and thereby to defeat an adversary, and equally to avoid being isolated and defeated by the adversary.

Therefore the question of the appropriate alliances in the anti-colonial and anti-Imperialist struggle was bound to arise.

In his report to the 2CCI on the National & Colonial Question,

Lenin says:

*“We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the **national-revolutionary movement** rather than of the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ movement. **It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement**, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of **peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships**... However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries...”*

Here are all the makings of the NDR, including the name, even if the words are not quite in their present-day order. Lenin calls it “national-revolutionary”, but he makes it absolutely clear that he is talking of a democratic class alliance with anti-colonial, anti-Imperialist elements of the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries.

The 2CCI was followed within two months by the famous “Congress of the Peoples of the East”, in Baku, in the southern part of what was soon to become the Soviet Union. This was

the first international anti-colonial conference, and what followed it during the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was the defeat of direct colonial rule throughout the entire globe, based on the tactics laid down in Lenin's report.

Therefore Lenin's report on the National and Colonial Question is treated here as an undoubted classic.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Report on National and Colonial Question, 2CCI, 1920, Lenin.](#)
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